渴きと応え

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私が物心ついた頃は、山戸の小さい村の子どもで、目の前にまた遠くに、いつも山があった。風が吹き木々が揺れるのを見て、「神さまが怒っている」と小さい胸が高鳴り、森や林を通り抜ける時は、何かが後から覆い被さるようで息を止めて走った。母は「神様はみていらっしゃるから悪いことは出来ないように」と言った。このように子ども時代は自然の中で畏れの神体験である。

中学生の頃だったと思うが、帰りがカリックの洗礼を受けることを両親に言いに来た。私は話しに割り込み、進化論を振りかざして反対した。生意気盛りであった。しかし、帰りは何故か穏やかで、顔が輝いていたのが印象深いことであった。帰りを洗礼に導いたのはシスターアンナ姉妹である。

高校時代の世界史で、旧教の堕落による宗教改革に目も耳も奪われ、旧教はもう滅びてしまったと同然と思い込んで過ぎた。

「自分のことさえ満足出来ない娘が他の子どもの世話などできるものか。」との家族の憂いをよそに、憧れの仕事につき社会人となった。見習時代の仕事の厳しさに耐え、困難や失敗を乗り越え、仕事に打ち込み自己充実を味わい、

“我が思うままに人生を生きるべし”という感じの時を経た。と共に一方、人間関係を含め、苦しみは何故あるのか。避けられず抵抗すると益々我が身に係るその苦しみの意味は、私は何故生を受け、何を目的に生きるのか。人生いかに生きるのか。それにやがて俺が行動した時に、また友との楽しい出会いの後に、ふと過ぎる孤独と虚しさは何であるのか。

この渴き求めの間、姉の熱心な祈りが隣にあり、私は神の「時」に心を向けようになり、教会に通い始めた。公教要理を二年学び、教会の幼稚園に勤め、受洗した。1963年復活徹夜祭である。身の心も洗われる、輝いた人生の最大の記念の時である。同じ時に修道会修業の寮生活をした。これですっかりカリックの環境の中で生きようになり、大団心であった。日照学校の手伝い、青年会の行事等、その頃大学通信教育を始めている。私にとっては、洗礼（回心）と召命はほとんど同時である。一度しかない人生だから、幾つかの可能性の中から、いつか信仰で生きる生き方はと望むようになった。これには、寮生同士の語らい情報交換を、寮友と共に参加した召命熟想会の影響が大きい。神の招きとはどういうことか。何によって分かることができるのか。どのように祈るのか。何回も熟想会にあずかり、悩みながら祈り求め、神の恵みの光をてて修道生活を望ませ選ばせてくださった。神父様や友人、寮のシスター達が薦める会があったが、姉がCNDを薦めた。頑固に熱心に務めるあまり、初誓
頼の時も「相応しく応えられるか」という聖なる畏れが心を占めていた。

マルグリット・プールジョワとの出会いは、私が修練長のシスターラングロアの「会の歴史」である。「マルグリット・プールジョワは強き婦人でありました。」「マルグリット・プールジョワの熱誠は・・・。」私にとってはシスターラングロアはマルグリット・プールジョワの生き写しであったと思う。宗教の授業に於いて、マルグリット・プールジョワを子ども達に伝える時、マルグリット・プールジョワが自分の生き方を支配するようにと祈っている。

神のはかりによる長い導き、回心の恵み、祈り続いてくれた神父様、恩人、友人方に感謝しながら、今、ありのままの自分を誇ることなくまた恥じることなく生きていくたい。

SEARCH AND ANSWER
Bernadetta Rieko Hoshi, C.N.D.

My earliest memory is as a child in a small village surrounded by mountains. Yes, mountains, mountains, far and near. When I saw the strong wind making trees nod, my heart would beat fast, believing that God was angry. I did not like going through woods, for I felt as if some supernatural being were about to approach from behind and overspread me, so I always ran, even trying not to breathe. My mother often said, “You mustn't do wrong, for God is watching you all the time.” In this way, my first experience of God in childhood was that of fear of him in nature.

I think I was still in junior high school when my older sister came home to tell my parents about her decision to be baptized a Catholic. I chipped into their conversation and opposed her strongly, flourishing the theory of evolution. I was a proud youngster. My sister, however, was surprisingly calm, and her face was shining. I was impressed. It was Sister Anna Saito, C.N.D., who had led her to the Catholic faith.

In senior high school, I learned about the Revolution, “caused by the corruption of the Catholic Church”. My ears and eyes were filled with the exciting knowledge. So I finished school convinced that the Catholic Church had been virtually overthrown.

I got a job and started my independent life, which had been my dream, in spite of my family’s solicitude: “Rieko, you don’t even know how to look after yourself satisfactorily, and you already want to look after other children.” The process of getting used to my task was hard, but I was willing to endure it. Overcoming difficulties, learning from my own failures and devoting all my strength to work brought the contentment of self-realization. I said to myself, “Now my life is under control. I can do whatever I want.” At the same time, I could not help asking myself why.
there were sufferings in the world, as I had begun to taste some problems in human relations. When I tried to avoid such difficulties, this resisting attitude seemed to increase my pain instead. “What is the meaning of suffering in life? Why did I come into the world? What is the purpose of my life? What is the solitude and loneliness that I feel at times after the experience of successful achievement, or after a happy time spent with a friend?” I wanted someone’s answers to these questions.

During this period of thirst and search, with the help of my sister’s prayers offered unknown for me, my heart was turned towards the “time” that God had prepared for me, and I began to go to church. After studying catechism for two years, I started to work in a Catholic kindergarten, and was baptized during the Easter Vigil of 1963. It was the most memorable and shining night for me, as I was made completely pure, body and soul. At this point, I went to live in a dormitory run by a Catholic religious community. I wanted to make this moving into an entirely Catholic environment a sign of the great conversion which marked my life. I helped in the Sunday School. I participated in the activities of the young members of the parish. I also started to take correspondence courses for college studies. For me, the graces of conversion, baptism and vocation all came almost simultaneously. There was only one life for me. There might be several possibilities, but it was the way of thoroughly living the faith that seemed to be the most worthwhile, and I wanted that. I came to think this way while talking with the dormitory companions with whom I exchanged information, as well as during vocation retreats I attended with these friends. “What does it mean that God calls us, and how do we know that? How should we pray?” Searching for the answers to these questions, I went to several retreats, and prayed and wondered. God finally shed his light on me, and led me to want and choose religious life. The priest, my friends and the nuns I knew recommended a certain community, but my sister suggested the C.N.D. I pursued my vocation stubbornly and zealously. So much so that, on the day of my first vows, my heart was occupied by a pious anxiety as to whether I would be worthy to answer his call.

My encounter with Marguerite Bourgeoys was through the class of history of the Congregation given by Sister Adéline Langlois, my novice mistress. “Marguerite was a strong woman.” “Marguerite’s zeal was...” In fact, Sister Langlois herself was my image of Marguerite Bourgeoys. So when I tell the children about Marguerite in my own religion class today, I ask Marguerite to let her dominate my life.

Grateful for the long way of searching with gradual answers, for the grace of conversion, and for the priests, teachers and friends who prayed for me, I hope to live just the way I am, neither with pretension nor shame.